DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 055 FL 014 940

TITLE English Teaching Profile: Malawi. Revised.
INSTITUTION British Council, London (England). English Language and Literature Div.
PUB DATE Mar 85
NOTE 13p.; Supersedes ED 230 067.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Creative Writing; Educational Administration; *Educational Planning; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); *English Instruction; Foreign Countries; Information Sources; Instructional Materials; Language Research; *Language Role; Language Teachers; Literacy; Postsecondary Education; *Teacher Education; Technical Assistance
IDENTIFIERS *Malawi

ABSTRACT

An analysis of the status of English language use and instruction in Malawi begins with an overview of the role of English and percentage of individuals literate in English. Subsequent sections outline: (1) the role of English within the educational system at all levels, including primary, teacher, and adult education; (2) the present number and distribution of English teachers in the secondary schools, primary teacher training colleges, and higher education institutions; (3) the system of teacher training; (4) teachers' professional organizations; (5) print materials support; (6) educational administration in relation to English teaching; (7) the locus of English instruction development and planning; (8) English teaching outside the educational system; (9) British, American, and other agency support for English instruction; (10) commercial opportunities; (11) creative writing; (12) current research; and (13) sources of further information. It is concluded that standards of English in both general usage and in education in Malawi are high, and there is no problem of intelligibility or tendency toward local English varieties, a situation officially supported by policy. Teaching methods are traditional. The educational program strengths include an eight-year elementary school program and an adequate book supply. Weaknesses include oversized classes, an inadequate supply of qualified teachers, a high dropout rate, and a high repeater rate at some levels. Syllabi and materials are currently being produced. (MSE)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: Malawi

Date: March 1985

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1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

The Language Background

In 1968 Chichewa was declared the national language of Malawi, and Chichewa and English the two official languages. Schools are not supposed to employ other vernacular languages. The 1977 census did not contain any questions about mother tongue or language competence, including a knowledge of English. Accurate figures are therefore not available. Chichewa is understood by about 85 per cent of the population.

If literacy in English is taken as being achieved after eight years of primary education or more, the 1977 census figures indicate that 9.56 per cent of the total population over fourteen years of age are literate in English. Some usable English can be assumed after at least five years of primary education; the figure for this is 26 per cent of the total population over nine years of age. However, a very much higher percentage of the total population understand and can communicate in English.

English in Education

English is the medium of instruction in all secondary and tertiary education. It is begun as a subject in Standard 1 of the primary school, and is introduced as a medium by stages. In Standards 6 - 8 English is used as a medium for all subjects.

English is the essential qualification for advancement in all types of employment, as well as being the gateway to the wider world of knowledge. The motivation for learning English is therefore very great, and the Government is currently giving very strong support to measures designed to raise standards.

FL014940

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English in Internal Communication

Although Chichewa is used as lingua franca by the majority of the population, English plays this role for virtually all educated people. At all levels the medium of conversation will generally be a Malawian language, except where expatriates or other indigenous speakers are present. English is used more frequently in letter writing than in speech.

English is much more important than its limited use as a lingua franca might suggest. It is the language of administration and of politics. English is compulsory in Parliament and all MPs are required to pass a stringent test. Ministries use English for their correspondence, laws are enacted in English, and it is the language of all but the traditional courts. English is the main language of the mass media.

The Daily Times is printed in English and the Malawi News has the great majority of its pages in English. About a third of all broadcasts by the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation are in English and the language predominates in business, commerce and advertising.

English in External Communication

Malawians use English exclusively, both in writing and in speech, to communicate with the outside world.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Primary Education

The primary school course lasts eight years. English is begun as a subject at the beginning of the first term of Standard 1. The first year's work is almost entirely oral, although a few pre-reading activities are introduced in the third term. Reading in Chichewa starts at the beginning of the first year and reading in English begins in Standard 2.

A Ministry of Education circular of 1966 gives the official policy on the staggered introduction of English as a medium:

i From Standard 1, physical education should be taught as far as possible in English.

ii From Standard 4, in addition to i above, arithmetic should be taught in English.

iii From Standard 5, in addition to ii above, general science and geography should be taught in English.

iv From Standard 6, in addition to iii above, history, civics and all remaining subjects should be taught in English.

The number of hours per week allocated to the teaching is as follows:

Standard 1	:	five thirty-minute periods
Standard 2	:	seven thirty-minute periods
Standard 3 - 8	:	nine thirty-five-minute periods

In Standard 5 nine periods a week consist of eight English language lessons and one English grammar lesson. In Standards 6 - 8 there are six English language lessons and three English grammar lessons. H E The Life President insists on this. No formal distinction is made at this stage between English language and English literature.

At the end of Standard 8, pupils take the Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) Examination. The English language examination of the PSLC is in two parts. The first paper consists of a short dictation passage. The second paper has sections on structure, punctuation, comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and composition. The examination is both a terminal primary-school qualification and a basis for selection for secondary school.

The English in Malawi course is the only one recommended by the Ministry for use in primary schools. The course has been revised in recent years and is of a traditional nature. Both pupils' and teachers' editions of books 1 - 8 are in use. The syllabus for primary-school English closely follows the English in Malawi course. The course books for Standard 5 - 8 do not contain any reference to English grammar, but guidance on teaching grammar has been given by the Ministry in the form of a Grammar Teaching Scheme for all Standards from 5 to 8. This is currently being revised. The recommended textbook for grammar is English Grammar for Schools (Dzuka Publishing Company, Malawi).

There is a Standard 5 external examination which children have to pass in order to qualify for Standard 6. In practice, however, the examination is not an obstacle in proceeding from Standard 5 to Standard 6.

The inspection of primary schools is organized at regional and district level. Malawi is divided into three regions and a Regional Education Officer (REO) is stationed at the headquarters of each region (in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu). At each regional office there is an Assistant REO (Inspection) and immediately responsible to him are District Inspectors of Schools who inspect all subjects. There is no special provision for Inspectors of English at primary level.

Secondary Education

The secondary school course in Malawi lasts four years. The Ministry recommends that each of the seventy-two (government and private) schools allocates eight forty-minute periods a week to the teaching of English and this is generally followed.

The Malawi Government Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) is taken at the end of the second year. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the syllabus. JCE English consists of four papers:

1 Composition
2 Structure and Grammar
3 Comprehension and Literature
4 Aural

A pass in the JCE examination is the normal qualification for promotion to Form III of the secondary school.

The Malawi Certificate of Education (MCE) is taken at the end of the fourth year. It is the responsibility of the MCE Testing and Examination (MCETE) Board in Malawi. There are four papers for the English examination:

1 Aural English
2 Composition
3 Comprehension Summary and Usage
4 Reading in English

All papers are now set and marked locally. The MCE English Syllabus and Statement of Objectives were prepared by a special English Syllabus Committee consisting of Ministry officials and university and secondary school representatives responsible to the MCETE Board.

The MCE Reading in English paper, originally intended to encourage breadth of reading rather than depth, is now closer to the traditional English literature paper, although some questions inviting an imaginative or personal response are asked. Five books - there is no choice in the matter of selection - have to be studied in some depth. One of the books is a Shakespeare play, at present The Merchant of Venice.

An MCE with a credit in English is a recommended qualification for entrance to the four senior colleges of the University. A pass in English is essential to gain an MCE, the passport to all forms of higher study.

The Inspector of English is responsible for the inspection of English in all secondary schools and teacher-training institutions. The job involves advice on training, ELT methods, syllabus revision and textbook evaluation. Teams of from two to six subject inspectors visit all secondary schools at least once every two years.

There is no provision at secondary level for teaching English for such special purposes as science and technology. One private secondary school orientates some of its English towards the needs of secretaries.

Primary Teacher Training

The three government primary teachers' colleges admit both T2 students (with MCE usually after four years of secondary school) and T3 students (with JCE taken either after two years of secondary school or externally); two small grant-aided colleges take T3 students only. There are plans for three more government colleges. The Malawi Institute of Education at Domasi is responsible for in-service training, curriculum development and materials production.

Seven forty-minute periods are allocated for English and students follow an integrated language and methodology course. Literature is not taught separately. Many colleges encourage extensive literature reading, but this is incorporated into the English language schemes of work.

T2 and T3 students alike follow a two-year course, training to teach in any standard of the primary school. There is no infant specialization. At the end of the course either the T2 or the T3 Teachers Certificate Examination is taken. Both examinations follow an identical pattern as far as English is concerned, the papers being the English Curriculum, English for Study Purposes and English for Professional Needs. From 1984 the final examination is 50 per cent written and 50 per cent continuous assessment, including practical teaching. Results are moderated by a visiting panel.

The Ministry is responsible for T2 and T3 syllabuses and those being used have been followed since 1982. They each consist of 150 suggested lesson plans spread over the two-year course. The Malawi Institute of Education is to assume a greater role in the design of syllabuses for teachers' colleges.

Teachers' colleges are inspected less frequently than secondary schools. At present there is no provision for the teaching of English for Special Purposes (ESP) at this level. Each of the three T2 colleges has a language laboratory to help students improve their spoken English.

University

The University of Malawi consists of four constituent colleges: Chancellor College, the Polytechnic, Bunda College and the Kamuzu College of Nursing. Chancellor College offers a four-year general degree course in arts, science, social science and public administration. Bunda College offers a five-year degree course in agriculture. Both these colleges also offer three-year diploma courses. The Polytechnic offers three-year diploma courses and has first-degree courses in commerce and engineering. The Kamuzu College of Nursing provides a four-year course leading to registration as a nurse and midwife. There are proposals to introduce a degree course within the next year or so.

All first-year students at Chancellor College follow a common course in English, which currently has three hours of literature (generally taught with language needs in mind), two hours of comprehension and one hour of study skills. General degree students take a programme in which there is a strong concern for language and literature alike. A steadily increasing element of language work is being introduced and this is based on modern linguistic theory.

English is taught and examined as a subject within all diploma courses at the Polytechnic and students, whatever their main technical or commercial subject, spend three to five hours a week on language and communication studies. The Polytechnic also runs a diploma in technical education with language and communication as a subsidiary subject. The language and communication component is well taught, with an emphasis on methodology, discourse analysis and interpersonal interaction.

English is also compulsory with three to five hours a week for all degree and diploma students at Bunda College of Agriculture, as it is for registration students at Kamuzu College of Nursing. At these institutions the courses are now aimed at developing skills in using English for special purposes - technical/commercial, agriculture, nursing, etc.

The Faculty of Education is the only institution in the country that trains secondary teachers. It offers courses at three levels: diploma, Bachelor of Education (BEd), and the University Certificate of Education (UCE). Syllabuses for the courses aim at striking a satisfactory balance between literature and language. There is a strong emphasis on language and methodology, with an important literature component (amounting to approximately a quarter of the total time). The English courses in the Faculty of Education are divided into two categories: special courses for the pre-service training of teachers of English and general courses for the pre-service training of teachers of other subjects through English. English courses are compulsory for all the diploma students. At present students who go on to take the BEd course at the end of their third year may either drop English completely or specialize in it. Those who so specialize take an additional course, which covers such areas as the nature of language, language acquisition and learning and methodology. This pattern is under review. With some subject combinations at BEd level, English may be taken as a subsidiary subject. The University Certificate of Education provides a one-year course designed for graduates who have neither qualification nor experience of teaching.

Syllabuses and the choice of course books are the responsibility of the departments within the colleges, but the syllabuses are subject to final ratification by the Senate. Both degree and diploma examinations are set internally by individual colleges; papers and written scripts are moderated by external examiners. The weight attached to final examination results, as opposed to continuous assessment, varies. At the Polytechnic the students' final grades in language and communication are based mainly on continuous assessment; at Chancellor College they depend mainly on final examinations. All students in all colleges must perform adequately in their first-year English studies if they are to proceed to the second and subsequent years of study. In the final diploma examinations in engineering, public administration, education and agriculture, students must perform adequately in English before they are awarded a diploma.

Other Post-Secondary Education and Adult Education

In addition to the University diploma courses at the Polytechnic, there are Board of Governors' courses administered jointly by the University and by the Government. These consist of full-time apprentice courses (printing, welding, etc) and certificate courses (typist and secretarial) for students with JCE or MCE. They are given four hours a week tuition in remedial and specialized English.

The Polytechnic organizes evening classes for adults outside the University wishing to take English at JCE and MCE level.

The Malawi Correspondence College, run by the Ministry of Education, provides preparatory courses for JCE and MCE examinations. Those taking these courses are generally candidates who failed to get a place in a secondary school. Many of them are adults. They attend one of the eighty-five day centres or sixteen night secondary schools in the country. In 1983-84 there were 8,216 students on the roll.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Existing Staff

In 1982-83 there were 14,694 teachers in the formal education sector, of whom 13,174 taught at primary and 980 at secondary level. Of the primary teachers 14 per cent were T2 teachers (MCE + 2 years' professional training) and 52 per cent were T3 teachers (JCE + 2 years). The rest were untrained but had at least a minimum formal education. At secondary level 47 per cent of teachers possessed the diploma, 10 per cent T3 or T2 qualifications and 43 per cent the University Certificate of Education or BEd. The shortage of teachers can be measured by the high pupil/teacher ratio which varies considerably among the 24 districts but averages 1:64 in government-assisted primary schools. At the secondary level there is a teacher/pupil ratio of 1:20 and at the teachers colleges 1:17. Class sizes are generally acceptable. Key post teachers under the British Expatriates Supplementation Scheme (BESS) are recruited for non-governmental institutions and a total of eleven such English teachers were at post in 1984.

Secondary Schools

Total No of schools	Local staff	Expatriate British	Expatriate others	Total
70	131	32	18	181

The figure for local staff is approximate, since many teachers of English also teach other subjects.

The thirty-two British expatriate staff are made up of eleven BESS teachers, seven wives, seven VSOs and seven missionaries. The other expatriate staff are mainly missionaries but include seven teachers sent by the World University Service of Canada.

Primary Teacher Training Colleges

Total No of schools	Local staff	Expatriate British	Total
5	22	2	24

University

	Local staff in situ	Local staff on study leave	Expatriate British	Expatriate others	Total
Chancellor College	5	5	3	1	14
Polytechnic	5	2			7
Bunda College	2	1		1	4
Kamuzu College of Nursing	5	1			6
Polytechnic Board of Governors	5	1			6

These figures show a marked trend towards localization in recent years. With the exception of the University, numbers and levels of competence are still inadequate. The tendency is for the best teachers to move from schools to the University. The opening of new secondary schools and opportunities for promotion outside the secondary schools lead to a constant shortage at secondary level.

Teacher Training

Primary school teachers are trained in three government teachers' colleges and two smaller mission-operated institutions. Qualitatively only 68 per cent of teachers meet minimum requirements (T2 or T3); while quantitatively output from colleges falls far below the requirements of the expanding primary system. In 1982 the colleges trained 204 T2 and 689 T3 teachers, while about 50 more were upgraded to this level through in-service training in Domasi.

By the time they have reached T2/T3 level teachers will have received all their education through the medium of English from Standard 5 at primary level. In addition English will have figured as the predominant academic subject throughout their studies - 9, 8 and 7 periods out of a possible forty-five per week at primary, secondary and teacher training college levels, respectively. The subject is taken seriously both as a result of top-level exhortations and of the fact that failure at JCE or MCE level is an absolute bar to further academic promotion. By the standards of comparable countries,

the general level of attainment is good. The chief weaknesses in primary schools are the large numbers of inadequately qualified and untrained teachers, shortages of books and materials and an overcrowded curriculum.

The strengths in teachers' colleges are a new well-designed syllabus and the provision of teaching materials developed under the Key English Language Teaching (KELT) TC Project 1979-85, enthusiastic staff and adequate facilities. The training of secondary school teachers is the responsibility of the University Faculty of Education. A course in the Diploma of Education is offered and the number specializing in English in 1984-85 is as follows:

2nd year	163
3rd year	94
4th year	64
5th year	29

A new mature entry scheme was initiated in 1978-79 and provides a Special Diploma in Education after two years' training.

Professional Organizations

The Association for the Teaching of English in Malawi (ATEM) is a profess[illegible] organization for teachers of English. It organizes an annual drama festiv[illegible] and there are branches in three regions which hold occasional meetings. These usually take the form of a lecture from a visiting speaker. ATEM also produces an occasional newsletter.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

Teaching aids are in short supply in most primary schools and there is often a shortage of textbooks in spite of the World Bank Scheme to supply each primary school with a textbook for English, Chichewa and arithmetic. For English this scheme was completed in 1984. The Malawi Government is charging a special book levy of K1, in addition to school fees, to enable it to top up primary textbooks. School fees are collected nationally by the Ministry of Education and Culture and not by local councils.

Quite a number of schools (between 40 per cent and 90 per cent according to the district) possess radio sets, but not all of them work. The Malawi Correspondence College and the Schools Broadcasting Unit provide weekly broadcasts on the English syllabus at JCE, MCE and teacher-training level.

The problem of too few textbooks and teaching aids is not only a matter of cost but of poor supply. Books and materials are purchased abroad for secondary schools and from local commercial publishers for primary schools at relatively high prices. Materials ordered abroad may take up to a year to reach the schools. Local publishing and materials production are needed.

Schools at primary level use the recommended English in Malawi course published by Dzuka. It consists of eight pupils' books and eight teachers' books; it has been extensively revised. Supplementary readers are advocated, but few schools possess any. At primary level the lack of other materials, such as reading cards and charts, is widespread.

At secondary level, most schools use one of two course books recommended by the Ministry for at least some of their work.

Forms 1 and 2, McAdam's Foundation Secondary English
Forms 1 to 4, Ogundipe and Tredidgo's Practical English

Much dissatisfaction has been expressed with McAdam's book which is being phased out.

At primary teacher training level the colleges are fairly well equipped in regard to basic textbooks and supplementary readers. The new syllabus relies heavily on the primary course books and special materials developed under the KELT TC Project.

Three colleges of the University are very well equipped with textbooks and other ELT material, and at Bunda and the Polytechnic there is a strong development in the design of special English courses for particular needs. Kamuzu College of Nursing has a properly designed course. As each college is responsible for the selection of books, the general pattern is one of great diversity and it is difficult to determine which textbooks are most widely used. Both Chancellor College and the Polytechnic possess language laboratories whose importance will be enhanced by the increased emphasis now placed on ELT and ESP work. A large number of commercially and internally produced tapes are in use and they deal with intonation patterns, structures and specialized English.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO TEACHING ENGLISH

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the teaching of English in all primary, secondary and technical schools and in the teachers' colleges. It is responsible for all syllabuses used in them, for all the teaching materials and for the teaching methods employed. It exercises this responsibility through the Inspectorate, which consists of a Chief Inspector, an Assistant Chief Inspector and a number of subject inspectors at the levels of principal inspector or inspector. For English there is a Principal Inspector of English and a number of inspectors qualified to inspect English among other subjects.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

This is undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Central College of Commerce is the only private commercial college in Malawi. The Rapid Results College has an office in Blantyre and makes special provision for African students studying English language.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The KELT TC Project 1979-85 is proving very successful and a KELT project at the Malawi Institute of Education is now under way. The Overseas

Supplementary Appointments Scheme (OSAS) post (Adviser in English) at Ministry Headquarters ends in April 1985. Other posts at the University (1) and secondary schools (11) are filled under BESS.

There is a small VSO presence in secondary schools, with seven volunteers involved in English teaching. A VSO English language editor is working at the Malawi Correspondence College.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

There are a few American Peace Corps teachers.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

Since 1980 a small number of teachers have been supplied by the World University Service of Canada. Seven of these are teaching English in secondary schools and two are at Chancellor College.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Commercial opportunities are very limited.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

There is an appreciable amount of creative writing in Malawi, even when compared with East and West Africa, and the poetry is especially good. More is being printed than formerly; but this is only a small proportion of the amount produced.

The Montfort Press in Blantyre, in conjunction with the University of Malawi, has launched a Malawian Writers Series with published titles now covering oral literature, drama, the novel and the short story. Most new writers first surface at the University's Writers Workshop which meets weekly throughout the academic year.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

CHIMOMBO M P F
The teaching of writing in Malawi secondary schools. Readability of secondary school texts.

CROSSLEY R
Second language patterns among non-native speakers of English and Chichewa in Malawi: a socio-linguistics investigation in two selected areas.

MAPANJE J A
Concord phenomena in natural language within generalized phrase structure grammar.
The pragmatics of modality/an elementary 'relevance' approach.
The interpretation of the future tense in English compared with some Bantu languages.

MAZUNGWI M
Core meanings of English modals ..... a case study of 'can' and 'may'.

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE
Interdepartmental (Linguistics and Chichewa/English/French Departments and the English Language Unit) language survey of Malawi.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
Reading project: an enquiry into the reading needs of primary trainee teachers.

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
Calendar 1984-86

15. GENERAL STATEMENT

Standards of English in Malawi are comparatively high and are likely to remain so in the forseeable future. There is no general problem of intelligibility and nothing that could be called a local variety of English appears to be developing. Any such tendency is strongly opposed by the authorities, with the lead being given by H E The Life President himself, and 'correct English' in schools is insisted on. Coupled with this is the place that English enjoys in the educational system: it is the medium of instruction from Standard 5, and in the highly competitive selection for secondary and tertiary education results in English are all-important. It is not surprising that English enjoys a high status in Malawi and people take a pride in speaking it well. Teaching methods tend to be traditional and certain 'progressive' methods of language are actively discouraged. Analytical grammar is taught both in primary and in secondary schools at the insistence of H E The Life President. There is a current trend towards a traditional 'English literature' approach to the reading element in the secondary English syllabus. This may lead to a separate English literature paper being introduced at MCE level.

At the primary level the strengths include a sound eight-year primary English course, which has been specially written for Malawi, and a fairly adequate supply of books written for it in schools. Weaknesses include oversize classes, inadequately qualified teachers, a high drop-out rate (especially in the early years) and a high repeater rate in Standard 8.

The secondary system works fairly well, with satisfactory syllabuses and sufficient textbooks. Well-qualified teachers, especially graduates, are in short supply and there is still a reliance on expatriate teachers of English. A recent programme to increase the number of secondary school places by increasing sizes of classes has inevitably introduced strains in the system. Morale is still high. The quality of teachers produced by the special crash courses mounted at Chancellor College has yet to be assessed.

Primary teacher education is currently benefiting from a well-designed KELT programme, which has led to a new integrated (language and methods) syllabus and the production of related materials.